

DEFENSIVE ADVANCED DRIVING, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS: A MINIBUS TAXI DRIVER'S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that the minibus taxi industry plays an important role in all South Africans' daily lives, little attention in terms of research has been paid to driving behaviour concerns affecting minibus taxi drivers, law enforcement attitude toward minibus taxi drivers and their working conditions. This research paper followed a cross-sectional qualitative research methodology that was tailored into a semi-structured focus group interviews and an experiment analysis. Ten minibus taxi drivers were selected using a judgement non-probability sampling method. Questions on the behaviour of fellow motorists and law enforcement towards minibus taxi drivers were posed, as were their working conditions. Also, an experimental survey was done to get real-time driving behaviour and performance data using analysis of video material. The recorded data showed that the minibus taxi drivers drove at an average speed of 114 km per hour in an 80 km per hour zone. The findings showed that there is arousing financial abuse by law enforcement toward minibus taxi drivers and also emotional abuse from fellow motorists. In terms of workload, the research paper responded and painted a bleak picture, as minibus drivers reported an average of 15 working hours per day. Furthermore, the research paper reveals that rising degrees of tiredness have an effect on reckless and violent conduct that results in accidents. Finally, the research paper provides insights into possible remedies and how the minibus taxi industry operators can enhance working conditions and decrease road accidents for minibus taxi drivers and commuters.

1. INTRODUCTION

The festive season road fatality statistics for the year 2021/2022 total was 1,685, an increase of 14% from the festive season for the year 2020/2021, totalling 1,449 (Department of Transport, 2022). This is also concerning as this festive season is only 40 days long. The Minister of Transport, Mr. Fikile Mbalula expressed the fact that the vehicle type that made the biggest contribution to road fatal crashes during this period was minibus taxis (News24, 2021). This was not the first time the minibus taxi industry was blamed for road fatalities. A research study referred to the minibus taxi industry as "coffins on wheels". This phrase was used by Randall (2019) while expressing concern about the sad reality of road fatalities within the minibus taxi industry. According to Ntuli (2019), minibus taxi drivers were also perceived as perpetrators of road rage. The latter researchers are not criticizing the industry in any way, but rather expressing legitimate concerns. Arrive Alive (2016) reported that from the period 2013 to April 2016, there were 851 road fatalities. Furthermore, the Regional Transportation Investment District (2016) was particularly concerned because South Africa, has one of the highest road death rates in the world, at 25-26 people per 100,000 of the population compared with the world average of 17.4 per 100,000 (World Health Organization, 2015). The most recent annual

figures from the World Health Organisation (2015) reflect that 13,273 people died in South Africa in one year – equating to 36 people per day, or 3 people every 2 hours, and this count omits those who survived with serious injuries.

Poor driver behaviour within the minibus taxi industry is a matter known to the government and also the leadership of the minibus taxi industry. The South African Taxi Council opened a taxi driver training school in October 2011 with the goal of improving the behaviour of South African minibus taxi drivers toward passengers. Before minibus taxi drivers could get their Professional Driving Permits (PRDP), the drivers needed to complete a three-month training course (Arrive Alive, 2015). South African taxi commuters have been complaining for years about the treatment they receive from minibus taxi drivers and their touts (taxi operators), the overcrowding of cabs, the loud music, the fast and reckless driving of taxi vehicles, and the taxi drivers' nasty behaviour.

In this research paper, a body of literature on advanced driving is explored. The literature review offered in this research paper does not omit the understanding of advanced driving but rather organizes the central ideas identified in this investigation. This paper contributes to the body of knowledge by reviewing literature on advanced driving and further highlighting the areas that require further investigation. The research paper is structured into four sections. Starting with the first section above, that briefly introduced the topic at hand, in the second section; the researcher presents a literature review on advanced driving. In section three, the researcher presented the methodology used in this research paper. In the fourth section, the researcher discussed the results of empirical data obtained through a focus group interview. This research paper ends with a conclusion and recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Minibus Taxi Driver

Perceived as the most reckless road transport drivers by other motorists are South African minibus taxi drivers, who are often referred to as "bo magezi" by disrespectful fellow motorists and commuters, "uno taxi" in Xhosa and "makhanda" in Sestwana, form a large group of workers within the South African minibus taxi industry (Barret, 2003). Sauti (2006) also questioned the driving performance of minibus taxi drivers. When defining a minibus taxi driver, or should the researcher rather posit them as "uno taxi" and "makhanda" as used by Mmadi (2013), who defined a minibus taxi driver as someone that normally works for an individual who owns a minibus taxi, and that minibus taxi is operated to carry commuters. Adding to the definition, Baloyi (2012) said a minibus taxi driver can also be someone who owns a minibus taxi and drives it himself or herself. Mmadi (2013) said minibus taxi drivers are employed privately and informally, meaning there is no formal work contract. The researcher refers to this process of informality as a "gentlemen's verbal agreement."

2.2 Advanced Driving

Advanced driving is a responsible way of thinking and behaving on the road. Additionally, according to Beanland, Goode, Salmon and Lenné (2011), it is an attitude that is reflected in the careful and skilful handling of a motor vehicle in all conditions, as well as the exercise of tolerance, restraint, and courtesy toward other road users. Pakusch, Boden, Stein and Stevens (2021), state that advanced driving is systematic driving about awareness and anticipation. The element of awareness refers to the physical and mental

requirements of driving, awareness of the conditions and the capabilities and limitations of the vehicle (Beanland et al., 2011). Whereas the element of anticipation is about anticipating the actions of other road users, good road observation, good communication, and safe and enjoyable driving, keeping the driver away from other motorists' problems (Beanland and Huemmer 2021). Furthermore, advanced driving is about developing high levels of knowledge, alertness, and foresight in order to recognise accident-producing situations as they occur, and about exercising the judgement and skill necessary to protect oneself.

Moreover, Pakusch et al. (2021) said that advanced driving is a system of driving advocated by law and was developed at the now famous Metropolitan Police Driving School at Hendon in England, which is recognised throughout the world as the most effective advanced driving technique. This system has been adopted and refined for South African conditions over a period of a quarter of a century. Thus, Arrive Alive (2016) and the National Prevention Defensive Academy (NPDA) (2021) added that advanced driving is about developing high levels of knowledge, alertness, and foresight in order to recognise accident-producing situations as they occur, and about exercising the judgement and skill necessary to protect oneself.

This capacity for advanced driving can be attained through advanced driving training. According to NPDA (2021), driver training raises the level of a driver's overall effectiveness by increasing awareness, placing more knowledge at a driver's disposal, and sharpening skills of observation, perception, and forward planning. Lastly, NPDA, which is one of the main advanced driving training providers in South Africa, said that advanced driving should include techniques for preventing hijackings and being aware of them (NPDA, 2021).

2.3 Working Conditions

Prevaricating working conditions are generally related to an erratic work schedule and fluctuating working hours (Aloisi and De Stefano, 2018). According to Fobosi (2019), the employment of minibus taxi drivers is distinguished by fluctuating working hours and an inconsistent work schedule that is reliant on the availability of commuters. According to the latter researcher, the danger of precariousness increases for the majority of employees with no contract (for example, minibus taxi drivers), including temporary or flexible workers. Precarious employment is also characterised by uncertainty over the length of the contract (Aloisi and De Stefano, 2018). Employees are more likely to be in precarious working conditions when they have low income, job uncertainty, stress and health problems, a lack of career growth and training, and a lack of collective rights at work (Fobosi 2019).

2.4 Aggressive Driving Behaviour

Several scholars have described aggressive driving behaviour in various ways. Dula and Geller (2003) identified three types of aggressive driving behaviour: unpleasant sentiments behind the wheel (such as frustration and rage); planned acts of physical or psychological violence (such as verbal abuse and obscene gestures); and risk-taking behaviour (such as performing dangerous driving manoeuvres to save time). According to Hauber (1980), aggressive driving is defined as driving behaviour undertaken by a driver with the aim of deliberately hurting (physically or mentally) another motorist. The latter definitions represent the most extreme kind of aggressiveness, which in the opinion of the researcher would more frequently be referred to as "road rage" since it attempts to endanger another motorist. Similarly, Shinar (1998) offered a wider definition of aggressive driving based on

Dollard's (1939) Frustration and Aggression (F-A) Theory. The F-A theory connects aggressiveness to frustration, implying that all aggressive driving behaviours are triggered by a frustrating "situation, behaviour, or event" (Shinar, 1998). The latter scholar (1998) believes that the rise in driving hostility that has occurred during the 1990s is a result of the increased number of frustrating situations that drivers have encountered. In his wise words, Shinar (1998) said the following: "I suggest that we describe aggressive driving as a syndrome of frustration-driven instrumental behaviour exhibited in inconsiderateness or purposely risky driving." Concerning this research investigation, speed, obstructing traffic, disregarding traffic signs and signals, and improper passing manoeuvres by minibus taxi drivers were considered aggressive elements. The latter-mentioned elements were described below by Sinclair and Imaniranzi (2015):

- Speed: This occurred when the minibus taxi driver drove beyond the speed limit.
- Obstructing traffic: This occurred when minibus taxis stopped in front of other traffic and caused a delay. In almost all cases (both minibus taxis and other vehicles), these were due to offloading or collection of passengers.
- Disregarding traffic signs and signals, red light running and stop line violations were the two types of aggressive behaviour observed among taxis approaching signalised intersections at the onset of yellow lights.
- Improper passing manoeuvres: There are several types of improper passing manoeuvres performed by minibus taxi drivers. For this behaviour, three evaluation indices (indicator use, minibus taxis' cutting angle, and cutting distance) were used to distinguish aggressive passing from non-aggressive passing manoeuvres.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

This research paper adopted a qualitative research methodology in the form of a focus group interview and video experimental analysis. The research methodology was used because it yields information from more than one participant at a time and also provides checks. Furthermore, according to Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013), a qualitative research methodology in the form of a focus group interview is useful in dealing with incorrect information, factual errors, and extreme attitudes. This is because participants are able to balance each other's responses.

3.2 Sample

Two focus groups consisting of five minibus taxi drivers each were formed. According to Krueger and Casey (2009), focus group interviews should consist of a minimum of four participants and a maximum of twelve participants per group. All participants were selected using a judgemental, non-probability sampling method from the taxi ranks in the Emfuleni Local Municipality and Midvaal Local Municipality. Judgemental sampling is also referred to as authoritative sampling and is a method used where the researcher selects units to be sampled based on existing knowledge or his professional judgement (Frey, 2018). Concerning this research paper, the research sample was selected because of the existing knowledge and professional judgement. Minibus taxi drivers between the ages of 18 and 30 are known to drive at high speeds. As the researcher worked with these participants, he selected participants who were known for rage driving and had been in accidents. The sample size of this research paper is 10 minibus taxi drivers.

3.3 Ethical Consideration

Foieser and Pojman (2012) define ethics as a philosophical subject that deals with moral or professional standards and distinguishes between good and bad behaviour. In other words, ethics are rules and norms that define the circumstances under which research will be carried out (Oates, Kwiatkowski and Coulthard, 2010). Ethical clearance to conduct this research paper was obtained from SANTCO Sedibeng Chairperson, Mr. Midday Mali, and the Top Six Vaal Regional Chairperson, Mr. Timothy Kubeka. Permission to conduct the research paper was also obtained from Mr. Tobeka Nkosi, who represents the Sedibeng district municipality. The minibus taxi drivers who are part of the sample were informed through a cover letter that their participation is voluntary, their response will remain anonymous, and they have the right to withdraw at any stage of the focus group interview. The interviews were conducted after all the minibus taxi drivers who formed part of the sample gave their informed consent. Furthermore, the focus group interviews were recorded with the permission of the researcher.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

All focus group interviews were conducted by the researcher. The two focus group interviews were held at the offices of the Get Ahead Taxi Association in Vanderbijlpark. The participants, who are minibus taxi drivers, were approached and briefed on the purpose of the research study, which is to find out their perspectives on advanced driving, behaviour towards other motorists, and the impact that their working conditions have on road fatality crashes. The field notes were recorded by the researcher during the focus group interview. This method of collecting data is also backed by De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delpont (2005), who all agree.

Furthermore, open-ended questions were used as this format for focus group interviews. The basis for using open-ended questions was based on its appropriateness for obtaining in-depth information, especially on the challenges faced by minibus taxi drivers. The interview schedule was developed based on related studies conducted by Ntuli (2015) and Mmadi (2013). Although the standardised focus group interview was conducted, the follow-up questions probed differed as they varied according to the responses given by participants. The first focus group interview lasted 45 minutes, and the second focus group interview, 55 minutes.

3.4.1 Video Analysis

GoPro cameras were installed inside the 10 minibus taxis. The speed footage was supplied by the Emfuleni Local Municipality Traffic Centre (ELMTC) and speed cameras were mounted on popular routes from Vanderbijlpark to Vereeniging. Video recordings were taken of traffic approaching intersections for 15 minutes in each direction in daylight hours, clear weather and dry conditions. The selection criteria for the road sites were chosen as the roads were congested in weekday rush hours to reflect aggressive behaviour and open during the day to reflect speed. On weekdays, video recordings were collected from Monday to Friday during peak and non-peak hours, while on weekends they were collected on Saturday between 1:00 pm and 6:00 pm.

3.5 Data Analysis

In this research paper, the data obtained was thematically analysed. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), qualitative data can be thematically analysed. According to Surujlal (2013), the process involved in thematically analysing data involves generating codes,

reading and re-reading the transcripts, and summarising raw data in order to identify both emerging and meaningful themes.

3.5.1 Trustworthiness in Qualitative Data Analysis

Trustworthiness in this research paper was ensured through transferability and credibility. According to Jooste and Khumalo (2012), transferability is granted through a complete description of the method used to conduct the interviews and also a justifiable sampling method. On the other hand, the credibility of the recordings was raised by checking and making sure they were correct.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the two focus group interviews, minibus taxi drivers identified challenges they are encountering in regards to their working conditions, perspective on advanced driving, and their behaviour towards other road users and law enforcement. From the thematic analysis of the focus group interviews, four themes emerged: law enforcement is against minibus taxi drivers' perspective; other road users lack respect for minibus taxi drivers; poor working conditions with a lack of incentives; and aggressive driving.

4.1 Law Enforcement Is Against Minibus Taxi Drivers

The minibus taxi drivers expressed their concern about law enforcement's behaviour towards them. The behaviour of law enforcement against the minibus taxi drivers was highlighted as follows:

- "Every time a traffic officer sees a quantum, he or she sees a cold drink. One can never drive a quantum without a cold drink".
- "If you see a local traffic officer, you must just take out R50, and for a provincial or national traffic officer, you must take out R100 or more".
- "Traffic officers are moving e-tolls."

The results of this research paper are in line with the reports of Corruption Watch (2012) news headline titled "The cop, the taxi driver, and the fight for survivability." The news article reported that the sheer volume of minibuses on Johannesburg roads makes taxi drivers regular bribe targets. These results were further supported by a news article from Business live (2019) whereby it was reported that a minibus taxi driver was nabbed for offering only a R70 "cold drink" bribe to the National Traffic Police. Lastly, the results were supported by Time live (2019) news headlines titled "Metro cop takes R10 bribe, is among seven arrested in two weeks".

4.2 Other Road Users' Lack Respect for the Taxi Driver's Perspective

An examination of the transcripts revealed that all minibus taxi drivers feel disrespected by other road users. The following narrative is indicative of this unwelcoming disrespect:

- "Magez'empompini".
- "Bo Mageza is very disrespectful...".
- "Fast lines are meant for taxi drivers".
- "The yellow line is a special meant for the taxi industry".

The findings are in line with those of Ntuli (2015), whose research findings show that minibus taxi drivers are classified as reckless drivers who have the same personality. It is

also well observed by the principal researcher that minibus taxi drivers are called unwelcoming names by other road users.

4.3 Poor Working Condition with Lack of Incentives

Another important challenge that emerged from the focus group interviews is the poor working conditions with a lack of incentives. The poor working conditions and lack of incentives were expressed in the following excerpt:

- "Taxi drivers get leftover fares on good days."
- "We are getting as little as R200 per week."
- "From 5 AM till 9 PM I am at work."

These findings are not a new phenomenon in the South African minibus taxi industry. A previous research study conducted by Randall titled "Coffins on Wheels" showed that minibus taxi drivers work at least six days a week, 15 hours a day with no Unemployment Insurance Fund or overtime. In Randall's (2019) findings, one of the participants admitted that bad driving is caused by working conditions. There is no minimum wage within the minibus taxi industry, and very often, minibus taxi drivers have to pay for their taxi cleaning, licenses, and minor repairs (Mmadi 2013).

4.4 Advanced Defensive Driving Is Necessary

The minibus taxi drivers expressed that there is a need for advanced defensive driving techniques. One minibus taxi stated that:

"Defensive driving can be a good thing because it can enhance our driving standards and promote the safer operation of minibuses."

A similar finding has been suggested by the National Hijack Prevention Academy (2020), in which the Academy hosted a 2020 minibus taxi defensive program that was aimed at promoting a safer operation of the minibus taxi industry. This finding is further supported by Ntuli (2019), who contended that defensiveness will change the behavioural patterns of minibus taxi drivers.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this research paper was to explore the challenges experienced by minibus taxi drivers in reference with the working conditions, behaviour other motorist and law enforcement have on them and their perspective on advanced driving. The results of this research paper showed that minibus taxi driver's view is that they are out casted by other motorists and whenever law enforcement sees a minibus taxi they see money. The participants' complain that law enforcement is against the minibus taxi industry. The working condition and wages provided to minibus taxi driver needs urgent intervention from Government.

Below, the researcher gives the remedies for the latter topics discussed in literature and also in the findings:

- The Department of Labour and the Department of Transport should investigate the issue of working conditions at minibus taxi ranks and also implement fair labour practices.

- The Government should enforce a minimum wage within the minibus taxi industry.
- South African traffic officers should have body cameras to monitor them at all times when they are on duty. This will prevent them from taking bribes.
- The demerit systems should be implemented to punish reckless and fast-speeding drivers.
- Government should mount more speed cameras on the roads.
- All minibus taxi drivers should only be allowed to drive the minibus taxi with advanced driving skills.
- To train minibus taxi drivers, the minibus taxi industry association and leadership should appoint advanced driving training agencies.
- All minibus taxis on the road should have insurance so that law enforcement can quickly identify minibus taxis operating without a valid operating licence.
- Road safety campaigns should be done all year round.

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